

*Supply—Solicitor General***SUPPLY**

The house in committee of supply, Mr. Badanai in the chair.

DEPARTMENT OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL

1. Departmental administration including administrative expenses of the Committee on Corrections plus such fees, salaries and expenses as may be approved by Treasury Board for members and the panel of consultants and staff named by the minister to advise and assist the committee, and grants as detailed in the estimates, \$1,015,400.

At seven o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 8 p.m.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Chairman (Mr. Richard): The house in committee of supply on the estimates of the Department of the Solicitor General, item No. 1, departmental administration.

[*English*]

Mr. Aiken: Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity tonight to make some comments on the estimates of the Department of the Solicitor General. In his opening remarks this afternoon the minister made a very nice, general and non-controversial speech, and there is nothing in it with which I can find fault. However, I do propose to mention some matters he did not include in his speech, and perhaps before the estimates are completed he can round them out by answering some of these questions.

The first matter I wish to mention regards the question of the reorganization of the department itself. I am vaguely dissatisfied with the name of the department in view of the additional responsibilities that have been given to it. Over the years in this country the office of the Solicitor General did not carry the duties or prestige which it now does, since its reorganization. At one time the Solicitor General was not even a cabinet minister. So that the name of the Department of the Solicitor General does not bring to mind for many people the very important duties which the minister now has to carry out. I am sure that if anybody in this government can give some strength and status to the department, the present minister can, and I wish him success along those lines.

The minister introduced his remarks this afternoon by saying that his department was concerned with crime, and then he proceeded to give us some statistics. I wondered then

[*Mr. Speaker.*]

whether we might revise the minister's title and make it "the minister of crime" or perhaps "the crime minister".

Mr. Knowles: But not "the criminal minister".

Mr. Aiken: I think some change in the name would be justified. However, the minister has his duties and I know that he will perform them well.

The first subject I should like to cover is the penitentiaries branch. I am very disappointed that the joint Senate and House of Commons committee on penitentiaries which was set up a year ago never got around to the subject of the penitentiary service in general. The meetings which we had were held on an emergency basis to try to give the department some direction in connection with the maximum security institutions, one of them already nearing completion and another one about to start. The committee therefore did not get around to what many people had hoped it would, that is the general concept of penitentiaries in government service.

However, out of these committee hearings there emerged one obvious fact, namely that there has been some extensive empire building in regional headquarters at Kingston, which is not in the best interest of the penitentiary service. This regional set-up was originally authorized for the administration of supply services in the region. However, I do not believe it was ever the intention that the internal management of individual units should be run from the regional headquarters.

• (8:10 p.m.)

There are two places in which this policy runs afoul of reality. The first one is the women's prison, and the other is the minimum security institutions. In the standing committee, we did not come to grips with the cause of this breakdown in the regional concept. It obviously exists in the service, and there exists also a hard core of institutionalized and custodial oriented people who want to run things from the centre. I am not going to name this group, even if I could. They are there and always have been. I presume they always will be. This core of people in the penitentiary service is unsympathetic to the minimum security program and resists progress in the social sciences.

This core does not involve the whole penitentiary branch in any way. I am quite satisfied that the minister and the commissioner have the very best of intentions in the matter. I know also that there are many excellent